DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 864 IR 052 815

AUTHOR Abbott, Randy L.
TITLE A Critical Analysis of the Library-Related Literature Concerning Censorship in Public Libraries and Public School Libraries in the United States during the 1980s.
PUB DATE Dec 87
NOTE 56p.; Project for degree of Eduction Specialist, University of South Florida.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Information; Adolescent Literature; *Censorship; Childrens Literature; Content Analysis; *Court Litigation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Library Material Selection; *Library Role; Public Libraries; School Libraries
IDENTIFIERS *Librarian Attitudes; *Pressure Groups

ABSTRACT

This content analysis examines library science and education literature on censorship in public and public school libraries in the 1980s. The first chapter discusses the organization and activities of right-wing and left-wing pressure groups together with ways in which librarians have responded to their pressure. The distinction between censorship and selection of library materials and the issue of a balanced collection from a conservative viewpoint are considered in the second chapter. The third chapter looks at some titles that have been frequently challenged and reasons censors give for wanting titles removed. The rights of young people regarding access to information are also discussed in this chapter. The next chapter reviews actual experiences of librarians and explores their changing attitudes toward censorship. Some of the most important court cases of this decade involving censorship in libraries are summarized in the fifth chapter. (82 references) (MES)

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIBRARY-RELATED LITERATURE CONCERNING CENSORSHIP IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE UNITED STATES DURING THE 1980s

by

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A special project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist in the School of Library and Information Science in the University of South Florida

December, 1987

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INTRODUCTION

This writer has listened to a variety of voices with an array of opinions expressed through journal articles. The aim of this special project is to formulate opinions on the state of censorship in our country during the 1980s. By reading widely in library science and education journal articles dealing with censorship, this writer has attempted to come to a consensus on a number of issues regarding the state of censorship in our country during this decade.

This project is a content analysis of the literature of library science and education journals. Rather than the literature serving as the basis for further research, the literature is the object of the research.

The research reveals a number of important issues being debated in the pages of journal articles. For the purpose of this project, the author has divided the issues into five chapters.

The first chapter contains a discussion of some of the right-wing and left-wing pressure groups pushing their own brands of morality on librarians and other citizens. The author discusses the organization and activities of these groups and how librarians have responded to their pressure.

Censorship in the public libraries and the public school libraries of the United States reached an all-time high in

1986, according to the People for the American Way's annual censorship watch.[1] The report lays much of the blame for increased censorship at the feet of the highly-organized conservative lobbies.

The act of censorship, however, is not the exclusive domain of conservatives. Liberals are also guilty. Both factions believe that their motives are entirely justified. Proponents of both schools of thought can present compelling arguments in favor of their positions. Librarians on both sides of the political fence and some sitting astride the fence have confronted well-meaning censors. This project will examine the arguments of both armies and the actions and works of librarians caught in the crossfire.

The second chapter of this project examines the distinction between censorship and selection of library materials. Included in this chapter is a discussion on the question of a balanced collection from a conservative viewpoint.

A difference that is often difficult to understand (especially for persons outside of libraries) is the difference between censorship and selection. Some authors whose articles this writer has read maintain that there really is no difference. They hold that a librarian, working in the capacity of collection development, who does not choose a title (for whatever reason) is preventing that title from being read by the library's clientele and that removing a book from the shelf or relocating the book to a place where only some people can get access to it accomplishes the same

goal. People who espouse this view argue that selection is censorship. To these people, not choosing a title is no different from removing a title, once the selection has been made. The result, in either case, is that the book cannot be supplied. This writer's project will explore both sides of this argument in greater depth.

The third chapter of this project will be a discussion concerning titles frequently challenged by censors during this decade. The chapter will include a review of those titles that have been challenged most frequently. In addition, this writer will discuss many of the most popular reasons censors give for wanting titles removed from the library shelves. Also in this chapter, the writer will include a discussion concerning the rights of young people to receive information.

Chapter four will review the actual experiences of some librarians as documented in journal articles. These accounts detail how librarians responded to challenges and how their responses affected the outcomes of the challenges. Also included in this chapter, there will be suggestions on how to prepare for the censor before titles are challenged. In addition, this chapter will explore the changing attitudes of librarians toward censorship.

The fifth chapter will outline some of the most important court cases involving censorship in libraries to come to fruition during this decade. The outcomes of these cases are shaping the future for readers of all ages to receive information.

This project will be divided into chapters representing the above issues. The author will discuss which issues are being stressed by liberals and which issues are being stressed by conservatives and to what degree. In addition, this writer will discuss where the authors of articles on the various subjects stand and attempt to reach some consensus regarding each issue.

PRESSURE GROUPS AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Politically savvy pressure groups have recruited, enrolled and organized persons with common objectives. These objectives have ranged from promoting prayer in public schools to lobbying legislators against abortion and having books removed from school and public library shelves. Both conservative and liberal groups have pressured their local libraries to either remove offensive titles or to include titles that represent their views.

Since Ronald Reagan rose to the presidency of the United States, conservatives have realized the political power necessary to attempt to redefine the moral priorities of the American collective conscience. In a 1982 article, Murray and Woods outlined the history of the present conservative movement, which has its roots in the Barry Goldwater presidential candidacy of the mid-1960s.

"Not until 1978, however, was the political significance of such groups recognized," Murray and Woods wrote. "Various groups within the fold of the New Right were effective in blocking ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in fifteen states."[2]

According to Murray and Woods, "prior to November 1980,

the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom received only about three to five reports of censorship each week; however, after that time, it was getting that many reports each day."[3]

The conservative movement in America is made up of many component parts. Perhaps the most well-known faction of this movement is the Moral Majority, a religious empire founded by Rev. Jerry Falwell and Robert Billings (founder of Christian School Action) in 1977.

Falwell, pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, heads the Moral Majority, which has an annual budget of approximately $56 million. Falwell has defined four subjects that are of special concern to the organization and its members: 1) pro-life, 2) pro-traditional family, 3) pro-morality, and 4) pro-American.[4]

Other charter members of the conservative conglomerate include The Christian Voice, a group first organized by Richard Zone in 1975 to defeat Proposition 6 in California, a law that would have granted equal protection under the law to homosexuals.

"Today, Christian Voice claims about 190,000 members, including 37,000 clergymen," according to Murray and Woods. "Its purpose is to lobby issues amenable to a conservative Christian viewpoint."[5]

Other top lobbies in the conservative movement include Citizens for Decency Through Law; The Roundtable, a group of activists who sponsor seminars and training sessions in up-to-date propaganda methods; the National Christian Action

Coalition, and M.G. "Pat" Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, whose main attraction, "The 700 Club," reaches an estimated weekly audience of 400,000 viewers.[6]

Rather than burning books, the Moral Majority and other conservative groups have put the emphasis on having titles removed from the shelves or having their own titles included. Conservatives produce booklists composed of titles that meet with either their approval or their wrath. According to a 1982 article by Dunn, the Reverend Lamarr Mooneyham of North Carolina released a twenty-eight page review of inappropriate textbooks and library materials used in North Carolina schools.[7]

Followers of these groups are encouraged to take their lists to their local libraries and compare the titles on the list with the contents of the card catalog. Depending upon whether the titles on the list are considered objectionable or desirable by the group, the patron either lobbies for exile of the title or inclusion. The goal of this exercise is to make parents become involved in the education of their children.

One of the primary issues, according to the Moral Majority, is deciding what special interest groups should have the dominant voice in determining which titles are chosen to be included in the library. "No group should totally dominate," said Michael Farris, attorney for the Moral Majority. "Not the Moral Majority, the ACLU, the NAACP, NOW, nor the American Library Association. If we truly believe in democracy and freedom, everyone should be heard and

respected."[8] During this decade, Farris has filed suit on behalf of conservatives in several states to have titles removed from libraries.

Although, as previously stated, the Moral Majority does not advocate book burning, the American Library Association's (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom reports a dramatic increase in the number of book-burning attempts since the beginning of the decade, from 100 a year in the early seventies to 1,000 in 1981.[9] This statistic adds credence to the perception that attempts at censorship and restrictions on the right to read have increased dramatically during this decade.

In an appearance at a round table discussion before the ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee at the 1981 national conference, Farris told the gathering to be more honest with patrons who petition for the removal of objectionable titles.

> "If you're going to take the position that you will defend a book regardless of its content, then let's be up-front about it. Tell the citizen when he walks in that you're going to defend it and don't make him fill out meaningless forms and waste his time and yours. Defense of intellectual freedom does not give you a license for intellectual dishonesty."[10]

The writings of Cal Thomas, vice president for communications in the national office of the Moral Majority, appeared in a different round table in 1981. His essay on the beliefs of the Moral Majority was published in the library science journal, Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory.

Thomas wrote that the Moral Majority believes in intellectual freedom and pluralism. "Yet, in the areas of

moral and philosophical belief," Thomas wrote, "those who would be first to cry 'Intellectual Freedom!' would probably mean 'Intellectual freedom for our side, but your side disagrees with us, and so therefore you are violating separation of church and state and all of that.'"[11]

Thomas also made a point that conservatives, long prodded by liberals to join in battles against social injustice, are now waging their own wars against the injustices they perceive. Unfortunately for liberals, the wars the conservatives chose to fight were not the wars the liberals wanted them to fight.

> "Many of our liberal friends who have been screaming for conservatives to be involved in areas of social justice, racism, bigotry, and the political process are now screaming and yelling because so many people have indeed come out of the churches, synagogues, and temples, and are involved. Their problem was never a lack of involvement; their problem was the issues they, and we, chose to address. Instead of bemoaning this fact and wishing they could lock conservatives back up in their spiritual closets, the liberals ought to be welcoming them to participation."[12]

Defining Secular Humanism

One sin that public libraries and public schools are often accused of committing is secular humanism. A conservative buzzword, its meaning varies. In a 1986 article in School Library Journal, People for the American Way, a liberal watchdog group started by television executive Norman Lear in the early 1980s, said trying to define secular humanism would be like " trying to nail Jell-O to a tree."[13]

Fundamentalists use the term to mean teaching they perceive as anti-God and anti-American. The American Humanist Association notes that there are both religious and

secular humanists. An article that appeared in the New York Times on February 2, 1986 described secular humanism as a toleration for all religious beliefs while accepting none, and an attitude that puts human values and experience at the center.[14]

Creationism vs. Evolution

One controversial aim of conservatives is to push for the legitimacy of creation science in the classroom. Creation scientists want their belief in the formation of the universe, as described in the Bible, to supplant the teaching of evolution. Failing this total dominance, the creation scientists want their beliefs given equal time and treated as an equally plausible scientific explanation for the creation of the universe and the presence of mankind on this planet.

Creationists, as one might surmise, believe that God made the universe in six days and personally handcrafted each plant and animal species. They also believe in an earth no older than 10,000 years. They believe in Noah's Ark. They believe in the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve and the literal explanation contained in Genesis.[15]

Many scientists, however, do not welcome creationists into the scientific community. These scientists do not believe that creation science is really a science at all. Rogers, writing in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, stated his view concerning the qualifications of creationism as a science.

> "The Creation Research Society has a Statement of Belief to which members must subscribe. The Statement begins, 'The Bible is the written Work of

> God and because we believe it to be inspired throughout, all of its assertions are historically and scientifically true in all of the original autographs.' The creationists begin with blinders, a bias which prevents them from considering any alternatives to strict Biblical interpretations. New approaches, new findings, indeed, the attempt to secure new data are avoided or ignored if they contradict creationist biases. This is patently unscientific; it is an intellectual straight jacket and it is the very antithesis of intellectual freedom." 16

Liberals and Censorship

While creation science is a cause put forward by conservatives, there are causes which liberals espouse that also limit the bounds of intellectual freedom.

Liberals have been particularly adept at arguing against titles that promote racism. While racism is unquestionably a societal ill, some important works in American literature have come under attack for containing objectionable words. The best-known work among these titles is Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. Since this cornerstone of American literature contains some derogatory terms describing Blacks, liberals have attempted over the years to have the book ousted from their local libraries. This action is contrary to the basic idea behind intellectual freedom.

Isaacson, writing in Michigan Librarian in 1980 wrote, "Intellectual freedom includes the right to be stupid, prejudiced, intolerant and wrong." [17]

Isaacson recognizes the importance a librarian can play in shaping public sentiment toward intellectual freedom. Librarians cannot separate themselves from their personal beliefs; however, they should not attempt to inflict their beliefs on others, no matter how noble the cause.

"As librarians, it seems to me we have no business in trying to 'raise people's consciousness' by taking sides on issues that are being publicly debated. We may, of course, take any position we want as individuals, but if our professional commitment to intellectual freedom means what it says, we have an obligation to contribute to the freedom of debate, and a concomitant duty not to take advantage of our public trusts to unfairly influence that debate."18

CENSORSHIP VERSUS SELECTION

Members of conservative and liberal pressure groups feel that they are justified in influencing librarians to omit or include titles, because they see librarians as building the library's collection around their own interests or beliefs. Censors do not understand that librarians are committed to intellectual freedom and that true intellectual freedom means openness to all ideas and not just all liberal ideas or all conservative ideas.

As Katz pointed out in an article for Collection Building in 1984, librarians cannot, in good conscience, refuse a request to include a title from a patron. The only legitimate limitations are numbers. For example, there is not a large number of square-feet in the building to house every conceivable title. There is not a large number of employees to tend to these titles. There is not a large amount of money in the library's budget to afford all these titles.[19]

It is not a foregone conclusion that all librarians are totally opposed to all forms of censorship. To the contrary, a librarian has personal tastes and likes and dislikes as

does any member of our society. However, the librarian has an obligation to all of his or her reading public to put aside the personal biases and respond to the reading needs of the citizenry.

The reading needs or desires of the readers in one city or community might be vastly different from another. The librarian must gauge this difference. The library must know its readers.

Shearer, writing in Public Libraries, identified the librarian as a gatekeeper. This image brings to mind a discriminating judge who chooses books on merit. Obviously, for librarians, there is more involved in selection than just personal judgment. Librarians rely on the opinions of professional reviewers for such publications as Library Journal, Booklist, Choice, Kirkus Reviews and other respected publications.

Even with all these tools available to librarians to aid them in selecting appropriate materials for their patrons, librarians can still miss the mark. Shearer compared the role of the collection development librarian with the role of the newspaper editor. Both the editor and the librarian have space and cost limitations. How many times do our nation's editors decide what stories will receive public attention? Our country's mass media shapes the opinions and attitudes of the public. Can librarians, in a similar fashion, shape the intellectual growth of the public through book selection?[20]

Judging from the actions of censors, at least

they believe the answer to the question is 'yes'. If censors believed that the contents of libraries could not have an impact on the intellectual and moral growth of their children and their fellow citizens, then what would be the point in pressuring to have titles moved, removed or included?

Selverstone, writing in Collection Management in 1986, discussed the impact of censorship on collection development. The rapid rise in the reported number of censorship cases in our country during this decade has made librarians think twice before ordering potentially controversial titles. However, librarians must make difficult choices, including the selection of titles that may face a challenge. Librarians must assume that a challenge is forthcoming and be prepared.[21]

The significance of a strong collection policy, especially in a school library media center, cannot be overemphasized. The policy statement must be an active one. It cannot be a document that has been stored away for a rainy day. It must occasionally come up for review and be presented to the school board for reapproval.

Asheim, writing in Wilson Library Bulletin in 1983, stated, "The librarian's bias is that the collection should be unbiased. But an unbiased collection is precisely what many censors disapprove of."[22]

Librarians cannot satisfy every voice on every side of every issue. Even after going to great lengths to establish a fair collection development policy and even after going

that extra mile to make sure that titles representing an array of interests are included in the stacks, there are still going to be censors. There will still be detractors who are pushing for their views to the exclusion of all others. This condition will never change. Librarians have an obligation to be as fair as possible without being prejudiced toward one group or toward one issue at the expense of another. However, in reality, librarians must know that they are being unfairly pressured and that no amount of unilateral compromise on their part will completely satisfy their critics, short of a pronounced endorsement in favor of the censor's cause.

Asheim wrote, "The social responsibility of the library is to preserve freedom of choice, and the selection policies of the librarians are designed to foster it."[23]

In a 1979 article in Library Journal, Swan argues that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is a purist document. By this, the author means that the First Amendment is an article that cannot be realistically, absolutely adhered to unswervingly. Swan calls the first amendment a 'noble rejection of compromise'.[24]

Swan supports his statement by arguing that librarians are inherently censors. In the performance of collection development, librarians choose a few titles for inclusion in the library and reject several others. These librarians, Swan argues, are self-censoring.

Self-censoring is not a new concept. Without a doubt, librarians do censor themselves. Occurences of self-

censorship by librarians is well-documented in the literature. Often times, when librarians do not choose a controversial title, they are responding to an anticipated challenge.

> "The point," Swan wrote, "is that as long as the library profession fails to take into account the simple and inevitable fact that the activity of censorship is an intrinsic part of that profession, it will be unable to come to terms with the issue of intellectal freedom in any truly enlightened way, purist or otherwise." 25

Other opinions, such as that espoused by Asheim in "The Librarian's Responsibility: Not Censorship but Selection," in Mosher's Freedom of Book Selection, draw an important distinction between the selector and the censor.

> "The selector says, is there is anything good in this book let us try to keep it; the censor says, if there is anything bad in this book, let us reject it. And since there is seldom a flawless work in any form, the censor's approach can destroy much that is worth saving."26

The Question of a Balanced Collection

It has been established in this chapter that librarians are concerned with maintaining a balanced collection. Essentially, this means that librarians are attempting to select titles that represent all sides of controversial issues and that they are making available to members of the public books which would otherwise not be available to them.

Conservatives have been active in this decade in lobbying their local libraries to carry titles of a right-wing political slant. Despite librarians' attempts to balance a collection, they are often not aware of sources that review conservative literature. Furthermore, they are not aware of what is available from Christian publishers or

even of who publishes Christian books.

Bailey, writing in Collection Building in 1985, made a point for concerned conservatives, when he decried the scarcity of information made available about Christian publications.

> "The critics, liberal or otherwise, hardly rush into print reviews of conservative literature. Richard A. Viguerie, Jerry Falwell, and Jesse Helms have all written books. Try and find reviews on their literary output and the search uncovers very little. When a review is encountered, the critic seems hard-pressed to say much that congratulates. If one of these writers appears on television--with the exception of Christian broadcasting--to discuss his books, a less than serious attitude pervades the whole affair." 27

Bailey's article also includes a list of conservative titles that followers are encouraged to carry to their local libraries in order to compare the list with the card catalog. This list is known as the Cal Thomas Test. Thomas, formerly a news reporter with NBC, is a vice-president in Moral Majority. The list of 33 titles includes Listen America! by Jerry Falwell, The End of an Era by Phyllis Schlafly and Dictatorships and Double Standards by Jeane Kirkpatrick. 28

Deane recommends that the collection development librarian visit the local religious book store and note their materials and displays. Deane, writing in Southeastern Librarian in 1983, suggested that librarians not overlook religious paperbacks, comic books, records, tapes and movies--all of which have a strong market in the religous community. 29

Journals carrying reviews of Christian publications include Christianity Today and Christian Bookseller Today.

"The librarian's problem," Deane wrote, "will not be in getting enough materials but tailoring the collection to community interests and needs. Few communities, after all, serve only conservative Christians."[30]

Conservative Christians have used checklists as a tool to measure the individual library's performance in stocking conservative books. The use of checklists is not new. This tool has been used in the past to measure the number of controversial titles in library catalogs. The results are used to alledgedly determine the level of self-censorship.

It has only been recently that checklists have been used by special interest groups to measure the presence of an ideology in the library.

Serebnick, writing in Catholic Library World in 1984, wrote that checklist-based studies are numerous and are often considered as serious methods to measure a library's collection. However, Serebnick stressed, most studies lack definitions, reliable checklists and systematic data analysis.[31]

Creation science believers have used checklists to measure the number of titles available on creation science in libraries, as compared to titles on evolution.

A 1984 report in Library Journal detailed how the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library Association of Montrose, Pennsylvania was charged by a group of creation scientists as having only one book on creation science, but eight on evolution, 563 on religion, 11 on mythology, 11 on witchcraft, and 51 on occult sciences.[32]

Librarians need to step outside of the traditional boundaries for collection development. They need to consciously choose to expose themselves to new voices in the publishing business. For example, censors of a conservative persuasion will be daunted by a librarian who has gone the extra mile to include Christian titles.

Falwell and his followers are correct in stating that titles representing conservative viewpoints are under-represented in most libraries. While librarians might be repulsed by censorship and upset by the apparent self-righteousness that censors display, they must put aside their initial feelings and ask themselves a question. "Why is censorship on the rise?"

Until librarians examine their own conduct, they will continue to be attacked by censors from the political right. Manley, writing in Wilson Library Bulletin in 1983, pointed out that conservatives take their mission seriously.

> "But one thing about zealots is that they don't give up. So the tension grows between the collection developer who feels strongly about sound selection standards and the people who feel that public libraries exist to save sinners through incendiary tracts that either reveal the exact date that God created the world (taking 168 hours) or predict the end of the world to the very minute (Eastern Standard Time, of course)."33

CENSORED TITLES, RIGHTEOUS REASONS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

What books are most often challenged by the censors? Who are the censors? What reasons do censors give for wanting titles removed? What are the reading rights of children as compared to adults?

This chapter focuses on the what, who and why of censorship. In order to talk intelligently about censorship, it is important to identify the problem titles, to find out why these titles are so objectionable.

Woods and Robinson conducted a study of educational institutions (including public libraries) that reported cases of censorship to the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom and whose cases were subsequently reported in the pages of the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom. This study covered the years 1976-1980.

Woods and Robinson studied a total of 425 reported cases. Of these cases, the highest number in one year was 101, reported in 1980. This statistic further supports the general belief that censorship began to rise with the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States. In 1980 a fifty-three percent increase occurred.[34]

The Woods and Robinson study found that administrators

within educational institutions led all other groups in initiating censorship attempts. Parents finished second, almost five percentage points behind. School boards represented over 11 percent of the initial complainants. Clergy and religious groups represented nearly six percent.[35]

Twelve reasons were given more than ten times for censorship attempts. The leading objection was to language; the next to obscenity. Most objections were related to sex, i.e. pornography, promoting sex, explicitness, and obscenity.[36]

The ten most-censored titles on Woods and Robinson's list were Go Ask Alice (1971); Catcher in the Rye (1951); Deep Throat (film); Our Bodies, Ourselves (1973); The Lottery (film); About Sex (film); American Heritage Dictionary; Of Mice and Men (1937); Are You There God, It's Me Margaret and Catch-22 (1961).[37]

"...it appears that the early 1980s are developing into an extremely active period of censorship," the authors wrote. The study, released in 1982, was a continuation of a study that was published in Library Journal in 1978, which measured censorship in educational institutions between 1966-1975.[38]

In a similar report, Westbrook, writing in Public Library Quarterly in 1986, examined reported cases of censorship documented in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom between 1972-1982.

Westbrook divided the complaints into four categories by reasons for challlenge. These reasons were religion and race, sex, violence and politics. The researcher found that "sex is cited far more often than the other four objections

combined. Secondly, underlying many censorship efforts is a basic fear that adults have lost control of children and young people."[39] Of the 434 complaints, 214 were based on sex.

> "In at least eighteen cases objections were raised on the grounds that the books undermined some basic authority. Complainants argued that certain passages encouraged youngsters to break governmental, religious and familial laws."[40]

According to Westbrook's study, Kurt Vonnegut and Judy Blume stand out as the most attacked authors. Other authors most often attacked included Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Ernest Hemingway and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

The five most attacked titles in Westbrook's study were Catcher in the Rye (18), Our Bodies, Ourselves (12), Soul on Ice (11), Learning Tree (10) and Manchild in the Promised Land (9).[41]

Engelbert discussed censorship from the political left, particulary feminists, in a 1981 article published in Show-Me Libraries.

The author wrote, "The feminist vision for society centers on dignity, independence, and safety from sexual assault for women. They view pornography as degrading to women and as a direct cause of rapes and molestations."[42]

The central question Engelbert raises in his article is whether pornography really is directly responsible for rapes and molestations. According to the author, there is not a solid foundation for the theory. Nevertheless, feminists still have a right to protest the obscene depiction of women

in men's magazines and sleazy pulp fiction. But where do the feminists draw the line?

Engelbert raises an interesting dichotomy that librarians face when defending against censorship. How can librarians claim that books are good because they influence people, yet deny that books also influence people in a negative way?

> "When we are arguing in support of libraries, we claim that reading does have an effect in shaping the character of those who engage in it to the positive benefit of the community. However, when resisting censorship attempts, we argue that reading any particular work cannot be shown to have influenced the character of the reader in such a way that social evils are the result. We are caught in a dilemma, and if we abandon either stance in this dilemma, serious consequences could result."43

In regard to the question of whether what one reads can effect the individual negatively, Goodwin wrote in Show-Me Libraries in 1984 that the Holocaust was predictable "from analysis of values prevalent in the semantic environment of Germany in the 19th and 20th century, values available in books and other papers, and values accepted by those who, unfortunately, came to power."[44] Goodwin specifically cited the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Donelson quoted some reasons censors gave to justify having books and ideas removed from libraries. Writing in The Clearing House in 1985, Donelson pointed out that sometimes the reasons given by censors are accidentally humorous. Donelson gave some examples.

> The Rev. Lynn May of Faith Baptist Temple in New Milford, Connecticut, objected to a course in co-educational home economics because it "will usurp

> the authority in the home. By having a young boy cook or sew, we're pushing a boy into homosexuality. It's contrary to what the home and the Bible stood for. When God set up the human race, there was a division of sexes. A woman's place is in the home. That's where God put them, barring unusual circumstances."45

The Rights of Children to Receive Information

Censors have rushed to aid childrens' minds. In the name of protecting the child's intellectual growth, censors throughout the ages have banned, burned and abridged books. What are the rights of children to receive information? What can they be expected to read and understand?

Children today are bombarded by words and images. What role, either positive or negative, does the book play in the life of the child? How are children of the 1980s different from children of previous decades?

In a 1983 article for Library Quarterly, MacLeod wrote, "The 1980s promises to be a period of conflict, as conservative reaction against the liberal trends of the 1970s tries to reverse an accomplished transformation in the literature."[46]

> "Adult attitudes toward children's books, as toward childhood are, in any period, an amalgram of personal, social, and sometimes political convictions. The mix has rarely been so complex or as explosive as it is today."47

For approximately the first sixty years of this century, MacLeod points out, there was very little difference of opinion in what the content of children's literature should represent. In general, teachers, parents, librarians, religious leaders and editors agreed in principle on content.

However, with the advent of important political and social reforms during the 1960s, including the civil rights movement, womens' rights movement, the war in Vietnam and campus unrest, the content of children's books slowly began to reflect the changing values of our society.

> "On the one hand, there was enormous pressure to liberalize children's books, to open them and the collections that housed them to every aspect of reality, so that they might better reflect the pluralism of contemporary American society. At the same time, from the other side of a curious equation came an equally strong pressure on writers, publishers, reviewers, and selectors of children's books to rid the literature of racism and sexism."[48]

Does the First Amendment extend to the right for children to receive information? What about adults? If the courts decide that the rights of adults to receive information is protected by the First Amendment, then why not children?

Courts have been traditionally reticent to interfere in the affairs of local school boards. "If a right to know exists for adults, and case law indicates that it does, a student's right to know is on the threshold of judicial recognition," Black wrote in University of Detroit Journal of Urban Law in 1980.[49]

Others disagree with the relatively new brand of children's story that is in vogue. Often called "realistic" books, these titles by such authors as Judy Blume, Paul Zindel, and Paula Danziger, present modern problems in modern situational stories.

Lucy Fuchs in a 1984 article entitled "The Hidden Messages in Children's Books", warned that not all parents

agree with the messages these books impart to children.

> "Underneath their interesting, realistic, and often clever stories, they are teaching children how to behave, how to cope with problems. Because these stories are so popular with children and teenagers, they are all the more insidious if one does not agree with the values they portray. For example, the same parents and teachers who laugh over Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing and Superfudge and hurt over Blubber, find that they do not approve of Forever, but they can hardly tell their children not to read it. Judy Blume is the children's favorite author and many children will read whatever she writes. A large number of children are learning their whole value system from persons like Judy Blume."50

Jerome Smiley, an English teacher in New York, wrote in English Journal in 1986 expressing the views of his eighth-grade students toward censorship. While only in the eighth grade, Smiley's students showed an understanding for many of the issues involved in the censorship debate.

> "If all the parents and school board members went to the school library, demanded that certain books be removed, and had the librarian take the books out, there would be no more books left in the library. There is not one book that doesn't offend somebody. People do have a right to read and write whatever they wish, and those people who are trying to "help" the children are really not "helping" them. Actually they are keeping children from knowing what the outside world is like."51

CENSORSHIP: EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES OF LIBRARIANS

It all began for Elyse Clark, middle school librarian in the Hanover Public Schools in Hanover, Pennsylvania, in October of 1984 when a parent of a third-grade student filed a formal complaint against Norma Klein's Honey of a Chimp. Writing in School Library Journal in 1986, Clark described her fight against censorship.[52]

The local newspaper quoted the offended parent as saying that the work "contained strong sexual content, a bias to liberal values and morals, and indecent language. "[The] material condones certain values, attitudes and behaviors."[53]

At the bottom of the complaint form, the parent wrote, "recommend reviewing all Judy Blume books for similar content."[54]

The complaint was handled by three administrators and the newly appointed elementary school librarian. The school administration ordered the removal of Honey of a Chimp, and Judy Blume's Blubber, Deenie, Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself, Tiger Eyes, and It's Not the End of the World from all elementary school libraries. Later in same year, the board met in closed session and decided to remove the same titles from the middle school and high school libraries.

After some pressure, the school board decided the titles could stay in the high school library but not in the middle school. The middle school did not carry Honey of a Chimp, but it had all of the Judy Blume titles.

Having received a directive in writing from the school administration, Clark removed the five Blume titles from the shelves and put them in her desk. Clark brought a grievance against the school board, stating that policy had not been followed and there had never been a complaint against any of the books at the middle school level.

Clark, along with her principal and four other teachers, was named to a middle school committee to review the titles and make a recommendation to the school board.

Meanwhile, two other Blume titles Then Again Maybe I Won't and Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret remained on the middle school library's shelves. They had not been in the elementary school library, so they were not included in the original complaint.

The review committee voted almost unanimously (the principal voted to keep the books restricted) to have the books returned to their regular places in the library.

Despite the review committee's recommendation, the school board voted to keep the titles on the "restricted" shelf and require students to get parental permission to check out any of the titles.

Judith Krug, director of the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom, wrote, at Clark's request, a letter to the Hanover School Board. She urged the board to consider

the Library Bill of Rights.

Clark was directed to write a sample permission slip for children to take home to their parents. Clark stepped-up her grievance procedure.

> "In having to enforce a restriction policy in the middle school library, I feel I am being discriminated against and my academic freedom is being infringed upon. To that extent, my working conditions have changed by requiring me to change my mode of operation. Therefore, I am requesting that the five Judy Blume books be replaced on the regular shelves and that the restriction policies be lifted."[55]

That day, Clark received a response from her principal: "Restructuring the circulation of books does not constitute a change in working conditions. Grievance denied."[56]

Clark was supported by some parents and students. In fact, petitions had been circulated and presented to the school administration. However, when Clark lost her grievance, she began to read the writing on the wall. The books remained on the "restricted" shelf. Clark saw the slow, steady hand of censorship creep up from behind and choke freedom of thought.

> "Time passed. People forgot. I remembered Judy Krug's remark that censorship is a subtle process, and can invade our institutions slowly but surely. I saw it happening in Hanover. Discouragement and fear had affected everyone. There were other implications resulting from the restriction policy. I was warned by my principal that the administration and school board were considering ways to change the district's book selection policy. I was cautioned to order only 'non-controversial' books in the future."[57]

While it is the common practice of many libraries to wait until an item is challenged before any measures are taken, a few libraries have not waited for the censors.

Stavely and Gerson, writing in Library Journal in 1983, described an effort on the part of the staff of the Watertown Free Public Library in Watertown, Massachusetts. They didn't wait for the censor. Their idea was to be pro-active.

> "From June until November 1982, any patron going up the stairs to the second floor of our library saw a collage of book jackets trapped behind the word BANNED in large red block letters. Drawn in by this eye-catching device, the patron could linger over some or all of the following items: an assemblage of cartoons and hand-lettered and typed quotations; a map of Massachusetts pin-pointing towns where censorship incidents had occurred in the past couple of years; a display case containing books whose titles and covers illustrated various aspects of the issue (e.g., the American Nazis in Skokie, Illinois; memoirs of a Hollywood censor); another display case containing materials on the Concord, Massachusetts Public Library's refusal to purchase Huckleberry Finn when it was first published in 1885."58

The Watertown Free Public Library took censorship to its patrons, rather than waiting for their patrons to bring censorship to them. Now, while censors are at their most prolific, is the time for librarians to raise the issues of censorship. Now is not the time to hide behind the desk and hope and pray the censor doesn't come your way. Stavely and Gerson encouraged librarians to take the lead.

> "The best discussions often take place not when the class is quiet and probably indifferent, but when it is upset and aroused. Now, when the censor is upset and aroused, is the time for public librarians to take the initiative and begin turning intellectual passion into dialogue."59

The Changing Attitudes of Librarians Toward Censorship

How has the recent increase in the reported cases of censorship affected the actions and attitudes of librarians? Librarians who have faced censorship challenges and

colleagues of those librarians are familiar with the pressures inherent in a censorship challenge. As noted in the case of school librarian Elyse Clark earlier in this chapter, librarians can experience a large amount of mental anguish and can sometimes be faced with putting their careers on the line to protect the freedom to read. The fight against censorship is not always a popular one.

Hentoff, writing in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom in 1982, quoted one Minnesota librarian whose actions were altered by censorship challenges. Hentoff quoted her comment to him.

> "You know, we decided--and you're not going to like this--but we have to deal with this and you don't. We decided that we're not going to order any more Judy Blume books. Doesn't matter what the reviews are, doesn't matter whether the kids like them or not. Judy Blume is too much trouble. Her very name is going to bring trouble if we order the books and we're not going to do it."[60]

Bundy and Stakem, in a 1983 article in Wilson Library Bulletin, reported the results of a survey which polled public-library librarians on their opinions concerning censorship related issues. The population for the study was randomly picked from a listing in the American Library Association membership directory. Nine percent of that total population was sampled. Among those responding, eleven percent described themselves as politically conservative, forty-two percent as moderate, thirty-nine percent as liberal and three percent as leftist. Included in their findings was the discovery that older librarians seem to have a greater toleration for some types of literature.[61] The authors

wrote:

> "Fifty-six percent of those who graduated more than twenty years ago agreed that caution is called for with regard to gay literature, as compared to only thirty-two percent of the newest group and thirty-seven percent of the middle group. The oldest group also had the highest percentage of those who believe that removing racist and sexist literature is wrong--eighty-two percent--as compared with sixty-one percent in the other groups. . . .The oldest group also had the highest percentage (fifty-nine percent) who believe that libraries should carry Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party literature."62

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sponsored a survey of school and public librarians in four southern states: Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana. The report entitled Censorship in the South: A Report of Four States, 1980-1985 was reviewed by Chepesiuk in 1986 in Wilson Library Bulletin.

Researchers who have conducted censorship surveys during this decade have been surprised at the low number of censorship cases being reported in the South. The ACLU survey alludes to the theory that librarians in the South are not speaking out.

Martha Kegel, executive director of the ACLU in Louisiana, who supervised the survey in her state, says,

> "The survey shows that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. The censorship problem is extremely severe. A lot of librarians were too intimidated to even respond to the survey and almost all the librarians that responded didn't write their names on the survey. We only got a hint of what's going on from the librarians who were courageous enough to include comments."63

Tomey, writing in In Review in 1979, suggested several practical measures to take in order to prepare and respond to the censors. One practical suggestion was that librarians

read as much as possible, especially in the titles that they believe might be challenged.

> "When a librarian is able to reply to a parent complaining about a particular book, 'Yes, I know the book. I have read it all, and I remember the passage you are referring to,' then that librarian has gained stature in the eyes of the complainant, as well as confidence in his/her ability to cope with the complaint."[64]

One classic example of a study to test for self-censorship is that of the bedraggled, scruffy young man who approaches the reference librarian's desk to ask about explosives. He wants to blow up a structure approximately the size of a suburban home, he tells the librarian. Can she help him find information on how to build an explosive device?

This case was reviewed by Hauptman in Wilson Library Bulletin in 1976. Thirteen reference librarians in six public libraries and seven academic libraries were approached with the same question. Not one of those librarians refused to help the young man because disseminating information on explosives might be detrimental to society.[65]

The overall finding of the study was that the nature of the request is irrelevant; the librarian does not have the right to discriminate against a patron.[66]

Each librarian must come to grips with his or her own attitude toward censorship. Obviously, as demonstrated by examples in this chapter, being prepared is a great bonus. As stated earlier in this paper, librarians must expect to be challenged on titles and welcome the challenge. They should welcome the challenge. They should be prepared to meet it.

SIGNIFICANT COURT CASES INVOLVING LIBRARY CENSORSHIP

Members of the school board asked the custodian to unlock the library at Island Trees Union Free School (New York) one November night in 1975. The school board members had recently attended a conference at which they received a list of books that were considered unfit for school libraries. The list of books was interspersed with quotations from the works and anonymous editorials condemning each book as vulgar and obscene.

School board members wanted to check the list they were given against the school library's card catalog. They found nine titles in the card catalog that were also on the list. The nine books in the high school library were Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut; The Naked Ape, by Desmond Morris; Down These Mean Streets, by Piri Thomas; Best Short Stories by Negro Writers, edited by Langston Hughes; Go Ask Alice, by an anonymous author; A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich, by Alice Childress; Black Boy, by Richard Wright; Laughing Boy by Oliver LaFarge; and Soul on Ice, by Eldridge Cleaver.[67]

In February of 1976 the school board ordered the books removed from the shelves. The superintendent of schools interceded and appointed a book review committee. The next

month, the school board ratified its position and, despite the absence of a book removal policy, ordered the books removed from the shelves. After months of meetings, the book review committee recommended that five of the nine titles be returned to the shelves. However, since no action had been taken, five students in January of 1977 filed a class action lawsuit against the board in New York Supreme Court. The suit was led by high school student council president, Steven Pico.[68]

Since the case "presented substantial questions of federal constitutional law", the case was removed to federal court. The District Court opinion reduced the case to one cause of action, which alleged that the school board's removal of the books violated the First Amendment rights of student plaintiffs. Judge Pratt concluded that the board's action fell within its broad discretionary authority and did not "sharply and directly implicate basic First Amendment values."[69]

The court of appeals opinion took a different view of the matter. The court of appeals focused on the lack of any clearly articulated removal procedures and the cavalier fashion in which the board had treated the entire matter. Judge Sifton, writing for the majority, was concerned that the board's actions were politically and religiously motivated. The case was reversed and remanded for trial on the merits.[70]

The Supreme Court called up the case for review and heard oral arguments on March 2, 1982. The Court handed down

its decision on June 25, 1982 in a plurality opinion--there were seven separate opinions. Justice Brennan, who wrote the plurality opinion, began by observing that, while school boards have broad discretion, they must operate in a manner that comports with the First Amendment. Brennan examined the motivation of the board and concluded that, if the board intended to deny students' access to books because of the ideas within, the board's action violated the Constitution.[71]

On April 12, 1982, by a six-to-one vote, the school board decided to return the nine books to the shelves. However, the board insisted that the librarian prepare a note for the parents of any student checking out one of the nine books. The note read as follows: "The Board of Education wishes to inform you that the book(s) selected by your child may contain material which you many find objectionable."[72]

In December of 1982, the New York State Attorney General's office informed the school board by letter that the notification form violated a recently passed state law that protected the privacy of all library records. On January 26, 1983, over seven years since the night the school board inspected the library's card catalog, the board voted four to three to return the nine books to the shelf without the red stamp "Parental Notification Required".[73]

Although the Supreme Court's decision came down on the side of intellectual freedom, due to the splintered opinion of the Court, Pico is not considered by many to be a solid foundation for future censorship fights.

There were strong dissenting opinions on the Court,

including that written by Chief Justice Warren Burger. Nelson, writing in Wilson Library Bulletin in 1982, quoted the Chief Justice concerning his opinion on the Court's right to intervene in the affairs of the school board.

> "I categorically reject this notion that the Constitution dictates that judges, rather than parents, teachers, and local school boards, must determine how the standards of morality and vulgarity are to be treated in the classroom."74

In the Court's view, school boards retain the right to remove books if they are educationally unsuitable, providing the decision of unsuitability was not decisively based upon the board's desire to prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.[75]

In a 1985 article in School Library Media Quarterly, Cole traced key censorship cases from the Presidents' Council case to the Pico case. In summarizing his discussion of censorship cases, Cole wrote:

> "We can conclude with some confidence that the First Amendment does extend some protection to the school library and its holdings. Such protection may be envoked when improper procedures are followed in book removal, when removal is done on the basis of other than constitutionally neutral reasons, and when compelling rights of students and/or teachers are compromised. We can conclude that students do possess a recognized right under the First Amendment to access to the ideas of the library and that the librarian possesses at least a partial right of academic freedom in the decisions made about the holdings of the library. We can also conclude that local school boards do possess considerable discretion in their control over curriculum and that the curriculum extends to the school library and its holdings."76

In the Presidents Council case, a Queens, New York school board voted to remove Down These Mean Streets by Piri

Thomas. The board's action was evidently motivated by the concern of some parents who feared that exposing eleven-to fifteen-year-old children to the offensive language and the explicit descriptions of sexual activity in the book would have adverse moral and psychological effects. Contesting the board's decision were the Presidents' Council and concerned students, parents, a librarian, and a principal who felt that the First Amendment guarantee of free speech had been abridged.[77]

The district court had found no violation of constitutional rights, and the court of appeals unanimously affirmed that finding. Its reasons for so finding are worthy of attention, since they are often relied upon in the cases than followed Presidents' Council. The court determined that teachers and librarians had not been threatened with punishment or dismissal and were still free to discuss the book with students on school premises, that students still had access to the book in local bookstores, and public libraries, and that the community's wishes were being expressed through the actions of its elected officials.[78]

Decided in 1972, Presidents' Council paved the way for many more important library censorship cases. Morrill, writing in School Library Media Quarterly in 1986, wrote, "The Presidents' Council decision is disappointing because it set a precedent that permits a school board's neglect of vital First Amendment responsibilities and because it failed to resolve the tension created by educationally valid though unorthodox context expressed in an offensive form."[79]

In the Minarcini versus Strongsville City (Ohio) School District case of 1976, both sides agreed upon the literary value of Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle and Joseph Heller's Catch 22. In fact, neither the literary value nor obscenity were at issue, rather first and fourteenth amendment rights.[80]

> "A library is a storehouse of knowledge," the appellate court said. "When created for a public school it is an important privilege created by the state for the benefit of the students in the school. That privilege is not subject to being withdrawn by succeeding boards whose members might desire to 'winnow' the library of books the content of which occasioned their displeasure or disapproval."[81]

Going on, the court declared, "A library is a mighty resource in the marketplace of ideas. It is specially dedicated to broad dissemination of ideas. It is a forum for silent speech."[82]

SUMMARY

The issues discussed in this paper are all connected. There really are no clear separations. The influences of pressure groups overlap into the librarian's consideration when choosing titles for the collection. The librarian might think twice about or deliberately not order a title that he or she knows has been challenged in other libraries.

We live in a pluralistic society. Libraries, through their collections, should reflect the array of their citizens' thoughts, beliefs, concerns and needs. Whenever one segment of our society becomes aggitated enough to express their concerns to their local library, then that segment perceives that its intellectual needs are either not being met or are being ignored. However, if that segment of society's needs are being met by the library, then that group should attend to greater concerns than attempting to overstock the library with their own books, thereby overrepresenting their views.

In reading over 125 articles for this special project, this writer was struck by the tremendous increase in the reported instances of censorship during this decade. As stated at the beginning of this paper, much of the increase can be attributed to the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the subsequent rise in the political fortunes of long-suppressed

conservatives. Perhaps the political pendulum is beginning to swing back toward the center. Only time will tell whether the current increase in reported censorship cases is actually due to the conservative times, or whether parents and teachers are becomming more concerned than ever before about the intellectual and especially moral growth of children.

Library censorship cases in the future might be affected by our political situation today. As this writer finishes his paper, President Reagan is nominating another conservative to the Supreme Court. This writer wonders whether the tenuous bonds that support the right to read and the right for school children to receive information will be strong enough to hold against the weight of censorship.

What is not immediately apparent and will only be evident years from now, is the impact this wave of censorship will have on librarians engaged in collection development. What titles will librarians avoid in order to fend off the censor's presence? It is easier to assess the damage done to librarians who have been involved in battles against censorship. Some of them, making the ultimate professional sacrifice, have lost their means of livelihood in the defense of intellectual freedom.

There is cause for concern, but there is also cause for hope. Censorship is coming into the light. Persons interested in maintaining the freedom to read are coming out to support beleaguered librarians, publishers and authors who have always been on the defense against censors.

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